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**Testimony of State Senator Daniel Squadron before the New York City Council Committee
on Civil Rights regarding Resolution 1188
January 27, 2012**

My name is Daniel Squadron and I represent the 25th District in the New York State Senate. My district includes the Manhattan neighborhoods of Chinatown, the Lower East Side, Tribeca, Battery Park City, the Financial District, Little Italy, SoHo and the East Village, and the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Greenpoint, Williamsburg, Vinegar Hill, DUMBO, Fulton Ferry, Brooklyn Heights, Cobble Hill, Carroll Gardens and Gowanus. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this hearing.

I am here to express my support for City Council resolution 1188, which calls upon the United States Department of Defense to closely examine its policies around cultural diversity and the training of military personnel after the death of Private Danny Chen in Afghanistan. In light of the horrible events that led to the death of Private Chen, it is imperative that we do everything in our power to prevent such tragedies from occurring again.

Private Chen's suicide, brought about by prolonged bullying by eight fellow soldiers, is a tragedy on many levels. Private Chen's family lost a beloved son, and we all lost a member of our community. Moreover, it is tragic when soldiers abuse each other based on their race or ethnicity. Unfortunately, Private Chen's experience is not unique. It has been suggested that many other soldiers have been exposed to similar abuse, which can leave no doubt that the military must take steps to correct the conduct of its personnel.

The nature of the discovery of information about the death of Private Chen is also deeply troubling. Private Chen was found inside a guard tower with a gunshot wound to the head on October 3, 2011, while stationed in the Kandahar Province in Afghanistan. At the time, his family could not be certain of the connection between the racially-charged hazing and his death. It is unacceptable that outrage from the community was required to bring charges against eight soldiers and for the family to come to understand the true nature of Private Chen's death.

Military service is one of the most important contributions a citizen can make to our country. A vast, vast majority of those who serve bring honor to our nation and treat each other with the dignity that they deserve. It is critical that we remember that thousands of men and women in uniform share the genuine and unique solidarity that comes with serving together on our front lines.

However, this is an issue that requires zero tolerance. Regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, disability, or sexual orientation, the military must do all in its power to stop the practice of hazing. Basic human rights and dignity must be preserved and maintained by members of our

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armed forces, who represent the values of our nation in countries throughout the world. I urge the Department of Defense to increase enforcement of its policies against hazing and prevent harassment of our soldiers.

I urge the passage of the resolution before you today, and add my voice to those that demand fair treatment of every person that chooses to serve our country. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

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